



MOUNT RAINIER

*From Wood-block in Color by Ambrose Patterson*

## AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

BY STEPHEN T. MATHER  
 Director, National Park Service

**A**LWAYS until now when I have spoken of "national parks" the term has been applied to the national parks of the United States. Since my inspection of thirteen national parks this summer, however, which through four of Canada's parks, I visioned a bigger, broader national park system that correlated the parks of the United States and Canada, and perhaps even included those of South America.

Why not, after all? The visiting lists of the best known of our national parks show they were seen by people from all over the world; and the same is true of Canada. It should be a simple matter, therefore, in the development of the parks of each country, to consider the others and plan for interchange of travel.

While in Glacier National Park this summer I decided upon a trip into Canada and motored from Babb across the international border. As my time was limited I only had time to visit four of Canada's parks, Waterton Lake, Banff, Jasper and Kootenai. I had always heard of the beauties of the Canadian Rockies, yet had no idea of what an interesting experience lay before me.

The scenic beauty of these parks is superb, and they are administered in a splendidly efficient manner by the Canadian National Park Service. The field members of that organization whom it was my pleasure to meet are splendid, high-type men of whom any Government may well be proud. Through their courtesy I was able to make the most of every minute.

One feature of these parks which particularly impressed me was the development of facilities for visitors. In Jasper National Park, which is the largest national park in the world, and which the Canadian Government is developing on a scale fitting its size and beauty, the lodge accommodations, located on the shores of a beautiful lake, made a very favorable impression on me. Jasper Lodge, with its large main building containing dining-room and long verandas on which meals are also served, and its charming log bungalows grouped around the central building, is as attractive a place of this kind as one can conceive. The bungalows are well heated from a main heating plant, each bungalow has a separate bathroom, and the rooms equipped with electric lights. The furnishings are carefully selected, even to the dainty chintz hangings, with the result that there is an appealingly home-like air about the cabins that is so often lacking in mountain camps and lodges in out-of-the-way places. One would think Jasper Park, located so much farther north than our Yellowstone, would naturally be cooler, but this is not the case. The Japan current passes along the Pacific Coast west of here, warming the air, and this warm air finds its way practically all over the Park. There was no chill, even at night, while I was there.

If inter-park travel between the two countries is to be promoted, good roads must first be built. The stretch from Babb to the Canadian boundary is very poor at this time, but temporary repairs are now being made to it and a contract already has been let by the Montana State Highway Commission for the construction of a new road which will be completed in about a year. The Canadians are greatly interested in better roads, and their plans for good roads development are rapidly taking shape. As a member of Parliament whom I met in Canada said, "International highways are better than fortresses across our border."

It would be a fine thing for the park systems of both countries if the Canadian Park superintendents could attend future conferences of national park superintendents in this country; and the idea of an international conference of park superintendents has even been suggested by a Canadian superintendent.

Already the Park Service has gained from its contact this summer with the Canadian parks, through the plan to install in each heavily-forested park fire-fighting apparatus similar to that developed in Jasper Park. This was so exceedingly efficient that I directed the superintendent of Glacier National Park to make a detailed study of it in order that the plan might be adapted to our own fire-fighting needs.

The most interesting feature of this fire-fighting apparatus is an outfit that can be packed by horses or mules, or if necessary swung on poles from the shoulders of two men, into almost inaccessible mountainous areas. It consists of an Evinrude twin-cylinder pump, gasoline driven, with aluminum nozzles and connecting valves to make it as light as possible. The pump is fitted with three Y-connections so that several lines of 1½-inch hose can be run from the outfit in addition to the intake hose through which water is pumped from the nearest pond or stream. Two thousand feet of the 1½-inch hose in sections 100 feet long form part of each outfit. This hose is kept folded flat instead of rolled, as experience has shown that it can be opened quicker when folded. When a fire occurs at much greater distances than half a mile, or more than 300 feet above the source of water, a relay is established by setting up a canvas reservoir with a capacity of 150 or 200 gallons at an intermediate point and placing another pump there. If necessary several of these canvas reservoirs can be used.

The point I want to stress particularly in regard to these outfits or those of similar types is the quickness and sureness with which a fire can be placed under control through their use. They can be put in operation at most fires as quickly as men with shovels and hose can be put in, and once in operation can be depended upon completely to extinguish a fire in a short time regardless of the kind of weather. On the other hand, men with shovels and axes can fight a fire for days and be uncertain it has been safely put out until a good rain comes. It is almost impossible to know whether a fire in a dense underbrush has been entirely extinguished under the old methods of fire-fighting, but with a good compact outfit as used in Canada,

the area where the fire occurred can be so deluged with water that no fire could survive. Also when a fire occurs high up in the trees, where it is almost impossible for men to control it with the means ordinarily used, a well-directed stream will speedily control it. There is no doubt that thousands of dollars spent in fire fighting can be saved annually, and fine forested areas preserved for posterity by the installation of adequate fire-fighting facilities.

During the past year we found in our own national parks that one of the surest ways to prevent forest fires was to enlist the cooperation of park visitors. When the particularly hazardous fire conditions, due to the drought prevailing throughout the Western states, were impressed upon them, and the need for caution in handling camp and other fires explained, we received the most earnest and enthusiastic support from them; in fact, we decided that the more visitors we had the less danger there was of serious fires, since all were on the lookout to guard against conflagrations.

Now that we have this cooperation from visitors it will only need the installation of a sufficient number of fire-fighting outfits for use in inaccessible portions of the parks to insure complete fire protection.

It has been a source of great gratification to note the increased use of the parks by our people from year to year. This year's figures, just compiled, show that 1,655,629 people visited our nineteen national parks and thirty national monuments, and when our plans under the road budget can be put into effect there will undoubtedly be a further increase.

One phase of park activities that I would like to see greatly expanded is their use for winter sports, and the pioneering work done by The Mountaineers along this line has been invaluable.

Unquestionably annual outings of outdoor organizations, whether winter or summer, are a big factor in making the parks better known and leading to their use by more people. For this reason such outings are always very welcome in the parks, as well as for the reason that the members of such organizations are real lovers of the outdoors and it is a pleasure to the administrative staff of any park to note their joyous and appreciative use of park facilities.

The Mountaineers will be interested in knowing that this year the Sierra Club of California held its annual outing in Glacier National Park. This is only the second time that the annual outing has been taken outside the state. Two hundred and ten regular members of the club and fifty additional people necessary to handle the commissary and pack train made the trip, which was a huge success in every way, and which was carried out on a very economical scale.

With the aid of The Mountaineers, the Sierra Club, and other kindred organizations I hope to see the national park game take first place in our national sport and outdoor life. The terms "National Park Service" and "Outdoor Recreation" are synonymous.